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ABSTRACT

Since the 1950s, literary study has experienced a major paradigm shift. M. H. Abrams' notion that the author, reader, and the signified world are arranged like satellites around a stable text has been succeeded by one that acknowledges the reader to be a central determinant in any "reading" of a text. Five themes related to reader response criticism and its pedagogical applications have emerged lately. First, in the area of how the reader responds to literature, the teacher-researcher has been the principal player because it is the teacher who is in the best position to observe the process. There are a range of materials available dealing with several categories of response, i.e., response to fictional narrative, response to poetry. Second, the issue of how children develop in their reading, one of the most frequently raided, has been approached in four main ways: personal reminiscences of bookish childhoods; the growth of the child's sense of story in relation to Piagetian stages of development; the development of literacy; and deductions drawn from surveys of children's reading interests and habits. Third, scholars have begun to hypothesize about how readers differ in their reading practices. Fourth, reader response inquiries have been conducted in three areas concerning children's concepts and social attitudes: (1) multicultural and feminist studies; (2) whole cultural studies; and (3) cross cultural studies. Fifth, studies that closely examine particular texts while drawing on particular theorists are rare. (Contains 129 references.) (TB)

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University of Southampton

CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

OCCASIONAL PAPERS, 15

READER RESPONSE CRITICISM IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Michael Benton

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FOREWORD

Reader response criticism is the basis of the three occasional papers, Nos. 13, 14, and 15. The opening twelve pages of No. 13, Reading and Teaching Literature, give an account of reader response theory in relation to the practice of teaching. The application of response-oriented approaches in L2 classrooms are then explored in the rest of that paper. The discussion of the main theoretical ideas in No. 13 is edited and summarised, as appropriate, in the two subsequent papers. The overlap is kept to a minimum, sufficient to explicate the stance from which the arguments are mounted.

No. 14, Literature Teaching and the National Curriculum, is a contribution to an on-going debate in a highly politicised context. 'Response to Literature' is a much-used phrase in both English for Ages 5-16 (The Cox Report) (1989) and in the 'Proposals for the Revised Order' (PRO) (April 1993) and seems set to feature as a major element in National Curriculum English whatever the outcome of the current review. Yet, it is inadequately explored in Cox and seriously misunderstood in the PRO. 'Response to literature', rather like 'creative writing' a generation earlier, is an uncomfortable phrase and an easy victim: uncomfortable because it can sound as if it stems from behaviourist 'stimulus-response' thinking, which it does not; and, easily attacked because poor practice too often misconstrues the phrase to sanction neglect of the text in favour of 'any response goes'. Thus all response-based work becomes tainted and rendered vulnerable to the charge that it lacks rigour and discipline, which, as the paper argues, it does not. As in the 1960s and 1970s, when English teachers were often Leavisites without knowing it, so in the 1980s and 1990s many literature teachers operate from a response-oriented position without necessarily being aware of doing so. The

third part of this paper attempts to clarify how reader response has underpinned the thinking and practice of literature teachers in recent years.

No. 15, Reader Response Criticism in Children's Literature, is a survey of the application of reader-response ideas in the study of the novels, poems and picture books written for children. It attempts to map this under-researched area against the background of reader response concepts summarised in the first few pages in order to give future enquirers a sense of the main themes that have been developed to date and to indicate where further work might be concentrated.

No. 13 Reading and Teaching Literature was a paper delivered at The British Council's Symposium on New Approaches to the Teaching of Literature at the University of Salamanca, Spain, 20-26 September 1992.

No. 14 Literature Teaching and the National Curriculum is a draft chapter for a forthcoming book, Language Education in the National Curriculum, to be edited by Christopher Brumfit and published by Blackwells.

No. 15 Reader Response Criticism in Children's Literature is a draft chapter for The Routledge Encyclopedia of Children's Literature, to be edited by Peter Hunt and published by Routledge.

Reader-Response Criticism

The importance of reader-response criticism in the area of children's literature lies in what it tells us about two fundamental questions, one about the literature and the other about its young readers:

- who is the implied child reader inscribed in the text?
- how do actual child readers respond during the process of reading?

The main advocates of reader-response criticism acknowledge the complementary importance of text and reader. They attend both to the form and language of poem or story, and to the putative reader constructed there, acknowledging that the author makes 'his reader very much as he makes his characters .... When he makes him well, that is makes him interested, then the reader does quite half the labour' (James, 1866). Equally, they attend to the covert activity of the reading process, deducing the elements of response from what readers say or write, and/or developing theoretical models of aesthetic experience.

Whatever the particular orientation of the reader-response critic, one central issue recurs: the mystery of what readers actually do and experience. The subject of the reader's response if the Loch Ness Monster of literary studies: when we set out to capture it, we cannot even be sure that it is there at all; and, if we assume that it is, we have to admit that the most sensitive probing with the most sophisticated instruments has so far succeeded only in producing

pictures of dubious authenticity. That the nature and dimensions of this phenomenon are so uncertain is perhaps the reason why the hunters are so many and their approaches so various. Accordingly, it is necessary to map the main historical development of reader-response criticism and, secondly, to outline the theoretical bases which its advocates share, before going on to consider how this perspective - whose concepts have been formulated largely in the area of adult literary experience - has been taken up by researchers interested in young readers and their books.

A Shift of Critical Perspective

In the 1950s the criticism of literature was in a relatively stable state. In The Mirror and the Lamp (1953), M.H. Abrams was confidently able to describe 'the total situation' of the work of art as one with the text at the centre with the three elements of the author, the reader, and the signified world ranged like satellites around it. What has happened since has destabilised this model. In particular, reader-response critics have argued that it is readers who make meaning by the activities they perform on texts; they see the reader in the centre and thus the privileged position of the work of art is undermined and individual 'readings' become the focus of attention. This is not to say that the emphasis upon reading and response which emerged in the 1960s was entirely new. It had been initiated famously by I.A. Richards forty years earlier; but Richards's (1924; 1929) seminal work, with its twin concerns of pedagogy and criticism, influenced subsequent developments in

criticism in two contrary ways. For, in one sense, Richards privileged the text, and the American New Critics, particularly, seized upon the evidence of Practical Criticism to insist that close analysis of the words on the page was the principal job of critic and teacher. Yet, in another sense, Richards privileged the reader; and subsequently, modern reader-response criticism has developed to give the reader freedoms that infuriate text-oriented critics. Hence, Stanley Fish writes (1980: 327):

> Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems : they make them.

Or, even more provocatively (1980 : 152):

> It is the structure of the reader's experience rather than any structures available on the page that should be the object of description.

As Laurence Lerner (1983: 6) has pointed out, perhaps the most important division in contemporary literary studies is between those who see literature as a more or less self-contained system, and those who see it as interacting with real, extra-literary experience (that of the author, or of the reader, or the social reality of the author's or the reader's world). Reader-response critics clearly fall within this second category.

Reader-response criticism is difficult to map because of its

diversity, especially in two respects: first, there are several important figures whose work stands outside the normal boundaries of the term; and secondly, there is overlap but not identity in the relationship between German 'reception theory' and Anglo-American reader-response criticism. On the first issue, two highly influential writers, D.W. Harding and Louise Rosenblatt, began publishing work in the 1930s which was ahead of its time (e.g. Harding 1937; Rosenblatt 1938) and their explorations of the psychological and affective aspects of literary experience only really began to have an impact upon educational thinking (and hence upon children's experiences of poems and stories in school) when the educational and literary theorists began to rehabilitate the reader in the 1960s and 1970s. Subsequently, Harding's paper on 'Psychological Approaches in the Reading of Fiction' (1962) and Rosenblatt's re-issued Literature as Exploration (1938/1970) have been widely regarded as two of the basic texts in this area.

It is an indication of the diversity and loose relationships which characterise response-oriented approaches to literature that Harding and Rosenblatt are reduced to complimentary footnotes in the standard introductions to reader-response criticism (Tompkins, 1980 : xxvi; Suleiman and Crosman, 1980: 45; Freund, 1987 : 158), and that writers in the German and Anglo-American traditions have, with the notable exception of Iser, little contact with or apparent influence upon one another. In a thorough account of German reception theory Holub (1984) comments upon this divide and provides an excellent analysis of Iser's work to complement that of Freund (1987) whose

book summarises the Anglo-American tradition.

The development of reader-response writings since the 1960s has steadily forged a new relationship between the act of reading and the act of teaching literature which, as is illustrated later, has significant consequences for the way the relationship between young readers and their books is conceptualised. Prior to this time, during the 1940s and 1950s, the reader was hidden from view as the critical landscape was dominated by the American New Criticism, whose adherents took a determinedly anti-reader stance to the extent that, despite a concern for 'close reading', the major statement of New Criticism views - Wellek and Warren's Theory of Literature (1949) - makes no mention of the reader and includes only two brief references to 'reading'. Subsequently, the development of reader-response studies has seen the momentum shift periodically from literary theory to educational enquiry and practice almost decade by decade.

The 1960s were dominated by education, with the most influential work published by The National Council of Teachers of English (Squire 1964; Purves and Rippere 1968), culminating in two surveys, one English and the other American (D'Arcy 1973; Purves and Beach 1972). The 1970s saw the full bloom of reader-response theorising by literary critics of whom Holland (1975), Culler (1975), Iser (1978) and Fish (1980) were perhaps the most notable figures, all of whom were well represented in the two compilations of papers that stand as a summary of work in this area at the end of the decade (Suleiman and Crosman 1980; Tompkins 1980). During the 1980s the emphasis moved

back to education, where the main concern was to translate what had become known about response - both from literary theory and from classroom enquiry - into principles of good practice. Protherough (1983), Cooper (1985), Benton and Fox (1985), Scholes (1985), Corcoran and Evans (1987), Benton et al. (1988), Dias and Hayhoe (1988), Hayhoe and Parker (1990), Benton (1992), Many and Cox (1992) have all, in their different ways, considered the implications for practice of a philosophy of literature and learning based upon reader-response principles. In Britain, one of the more heartening results of this development was that the importance of the reader's response to literature was fully acknowledged in the new National Curriculum as embodied in the Cox Report (1989) and in the official documents that ensued. Such has been what one standard book on modern literary theory calls 'the vertiginous rise of reader-response criticism' (Jefferson and Robey, 1986, 2nd edn. : 142), that its authors see it as threatening to engulf all other approaches.

What are the theoretical bases that such writers share? Reader-response criticism is a broad church as a reading of the various overview books demonstrates (Tompkins, 1980; Suleiman and Crosman, 1980; Freund, 1987). Nonetheless, a number of principles can be said to characterise this critical stance. First is the rejection of the notorious 'Affective Fallacy'. In describing the 'fallacy' as 'a confusion of the poem and its results', and in dismissing as mere 'impressionism and relativism' any critical judgements based on the psychological effects of literature, Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954) had left no space for the reader to inhabit. They ignored the act of

reading. New Criticism, it could be said, invented 'the assumed reader'; by contrast, reader-response criticism deals with real and implied readers. Iser, Holland, Bleich and Fish operate from a philosophical basis that displaces the notion of an autonomous text to be examined in and on its own terms from the centre of critical discussion and substitutes the reader's re-creation of that text. Reading is not the discovering of meaning (like some sort of archaeological 'dig') but the creation of it. The purpose of rehearsing this familiar history is its importance for children's reading. The central concerns of response-oriented approaches focus upon

(i) what constitutes the source of literary meaning; and

(ii) what is the nature of the interpretive process that creates it.

Both issues are fundamental to how young readers read, both in and out of school.

The works of Iser on fiction and Rosenblatt on poetry, despite some criticism that Iser has attracted on theoretical grounds, have nonetheless had greater influence upon the actual teaching of literature and our understanding of children as readers than those of any other theoretical writers. No doubt this is because they avoid what Frank Kermode calls 'free-floating theory' and concentrate, in Iser's words, on 'an analysis of what actually happens when one is reading' (1978: 19). Iser's theory of aesthetic response (1978) and Rosenblatt's transactional theory of the literary work (1978; 1985) have helped change the culture of the classroom to one which operates on the principle that the text cannot be said to have a meaningful

existence outside the relationship between itself and its reader(s). This transfer of power represents a sea-change in critical emphasis and in pedagogical practice from the assumptions most critics and teachers held even a generation ago. Yet it is evolutionary change, not sudden revolution - a progressive rethinking of the way readers create literary experiences for themselves with poems and stories. In fact, reader-response is the evolutionary successor to Leavisite liberal humanism. It is perceived - within the area of literature teaching - as providing a framework of now familiar ideas which are widely accepted and to which other lines of critical activity often make reference : the plurality of meanings within a literary work; the creative participation of the reader; the acknowledgement that the reader is not a 'tabula rasa' but brings idiosyncratic knowledge and personal style to the act of reading; and the awareness that interpretation is socially, historically and culturally formed. All these ideas are ones that have had a sharp impact upon the study of texts and upon research into young readers' reading in the field of children's literature.

Young Readers and Their Books

Reader response approaches to children's literature which set out to answer the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter all have a direct relationship with pedagogy. Some are concerned with children's responses, mainly to fiction and poetry but latterly also to picture books, with the broad aim of improving our understanding of what constitutes good practice in literature teaching. Others

employ reader response methods in order to explore children's concepts and social attitudes. Others again, are text-focussed and use concepts and ideas from reader response criticism of adult literature in order to examine children's books with the aim of uncovering their implied audience and, thence, something of the singularity of a specifically children's literature.

This diversity creates two problems: first, there is bound to be overlap. Many studies cover both textual qualities and children's responses as complementary aspects of a unitary experience which, as the foregoing discussion has argued, follows from the mainstream thinking of reader response criticism. When considering a study under one or other of the headings below, therefore, its writer's principal orientation has been the guide. Secondly, there is bound to be anomaly. The nature and complexity of the studies varies greatly. In particular, there are two important collections of papers devoted to theoretical research and empirical enquiries in this area (Cooper 1985; Many and Cox 1992). These are most conveniently considered between discussion of the first and second themes below to which most of their papers relate.

The discussion deals, in turn, with five themes: the process of responding; development in reading; types of reader behaviour; culturally-oriented studies exploring children's attitudes; and text-oriented studies employing reader response concepts.

(1) The process of responding

The stances of those enquirers who have explored the response processes of young readers vary as much as those of the literary theorists but the most common one is that of the teacher-researcher attempting to theorise classroom practice. The range and combinations of the variables in these studies are enormous: texts, contexts, readers and research methods are all divisible into subsets with seemingly infinite permutations. Among texts, short stories, poems, fairy tales and picture books are favoured, with a few studies focussing upon the novel and none on plays. Contexts, in the sense of physical surroundings, also influence response. The 'classroom' itself can mean a variety of things and clearly there are crucial differences between say, monitoring the responses of thirty children within normal lesson time and four or five children who volunteer to work outside lessons. Most studies are small-scale enquiries run by individual researchers, perhaps with a collaborative element; hence, the focus is usually narrow when selecting the number, age-level, social background, gender and literacy level of the readers. Finally, reader-response monitoring procedures are generally devised in the knowledge that the medium is the message. The ways readers are asked to present their responses are fundamental influences upon those responses; they range from undirected invitations to free association or 'say what comes into your mind as you read', through various 'prompts' or guideline questions to consider, to the explicit questionnaire. Oral, written, or graphic responses and whether the readers are recording individually or in groups all provide further

dimensions to the means of monitoring and collecting response data.

Guidance through this diversity is offered by two older books already mentioned (Purves and Beach 1972; D'Arcy 1973); and, more recently, by Galda (1983) in a special issue of the Journal of Research and Development in Education on 'Response to Literature : Empirical and Theoretical Studies', and by Squire's chapter 'Research on Reader Response and the National Literature Initiative' in Hayhoe and Parker (1990: 13-24). What follows does not attempt to be exhaustive but briefly to indicate the main lines that process studies have taken.

The process of responding became one of the main objects of enquiry during the 1980s. Studies of children's responses to poetry began to appear in articles or booklet form: Wade (1981) adapted Squire's (1964) work on short stories to compare how a supervised and an unsupervised group of middle school children responded to a poem by Charles Tomlinson. Dixon and Brown (1984) studied the writings of seventeen-year-old students in order to identify what was being assessed in their responses; Atkinson (1985) built upon Purves and Rippere's (1968) categories and explored the process of response to poems by children of different ages. Several books also focussed exclusively on young readers and poetry and, either wholly or in part, concerned themselves with the response process, notably Benton, P. (1986), Dias and Hayhoe (1988), and Benton M. et al (1988). The work of Barnes (1976), particularly, lies behind the enquiries of Benton, P. (1986) into small group responses to poetry by 13-14 year

olds. What is characterised as 'lightly structured, self-directed discussion' is seen as the means of optimising group talk about poems and as the most appropriate way for teacher-researchers to explore the process of response. Dias and Hayhoe (1988) build upon Dias's earlier work (1986) to develop responding-aloud protocols (RAPs) which, essentially, require individual pupils to think aloud as they attempt to make sense of a poem with the help, if needed, of a non-directive interviewer. Preparatory group discussions were used to build up confidence for the individual sessions. The RAP transcripts were then analysed to see how pupils negotiated meaning. Dias and Hayhoe claim that their study is 'designed to track the process of responding as it occurs' (1988: 51) and their methodology is a significant contribution to this end. Similarly, the work of Benton (1988) and his co-authors focusses upon process. It shows three experienced teachers exploring how their students, aged fourteen and above, read and respond to poetry. Rosenblatt's transactional theory underpins the approach, especially in Teasey's work which gives the hard evidence for the reader's 'evocation' of a poem through meticulous, descriptive analyses of aesthetic reading. Bell's data shows the emphases of the response process from initial encounter through group discussion, to an eventual written account, such that what in mathematics is called 'the working' can be observed - in this case, the slow evolution over time and in different contexts of how young readers make meaning. Hurst's focus is upon the whole class rather than individuals. From studying the responses of pupils in a variety of classrooms and with different teachers and texts, he develops a model of three frames (story, poet, form), derived from

Barnes's and Todd's (1977) notion of the 'cycles of utterances' that characterise group talk, as a means of mapping the episodes of a group's engagement with a poem. The three enquiries are set against a critical appraisal of the main theorists in the field from Richards to Rosenblatt and all contribute to the development of a response-centred methodology.

The process of responding to fictional narrative was first examined by Squire (1964) and Purves (1968) whose early studies provoked many adaptations of their work with students of different ages and backgrounds. These studies all tended to categorise the elements of response with Squire's list emerging as the most commonly quoted and replicated in studies of children's responses. Squire's study of adolescents responding to short stories described the six elements of response as literary judgements, interpretational responses, narrational reactions, associational responses, self-involvement, and prescriptive judgements (Squire, 1964: 17-18). He showed that the greater the involvement of readers, the stronger was their tendency to make literary judgements; and that what he termed 'happiness-binding' (p.41) was a characteristic of adolescent readers' behaviour. Here, as in many studies of fiction-reading, there is a noticeable move towards a broadly psychoanalytical explanation for the gratifications readers seek in fiction (cf. Holland 1975). More recent studies include those of Fox (1979: 32) whose phrase 'dark watchers' is a memorable description of the imaginary, spectator role that young readers often adopt during reading; and Jackson (1980) who explored the initial responses of

children to fiction which later he developed more fully throughout the secondary school age range (Jackson 1983). Several books also focussed wholly or in part upon young readers' response processes, notably Protherough (1983), Benton and Fox (1985), and Thomson (1986). Drawing upon enquiries he conducted in Hull, Protherough suggests that there are five major ways in which children see the process of reading fiction: projection into a character, projection into the situation, association between book and reader, the distanced viewer, and detached evaluation. There is a developmental dimension and he argues that maturity in reading is connected with the ability to operate in an increasing number of modes. Benton and Fox address the question: What happens when we read stories? and consider the process of responding involves the reader in creating a secondary world. This concept is elaborated with reference to children's accounts of their experiences with various stories. The reading experience is then characterised in two ways: first, as a four-phase process of feeling like reading, getting into the story, being lost in the book, and having an increasing sense of an ending; and secondly, as an activity consisting of four elements - picturing, anticipating and retrospecting, interacting, and evaluating. This latter description has been taken up by others, notably Corcoran (Corcoran and Evans (eds.), 1987: 45-51). Thomson's work with teenage readers offers a further description of the elements of response to fiction and cross-hatches this with a developmental model. The requirements for satisfaction at all stages are enjoyment and elementary understanding. Assuming these are met, his six stages are described as: unreflective interest in action, empathising,

analogising, reflecting on the significance of events and behaviour, reviewing the whole work as the author's creation, and the consciously considered relationship with the author. Thomson's is a sophisticated and detailed account, firmly rooted in young readers' fiction reading, and drawing effectively upon the theoretical literature summarised earlier in this chapter.

As can be seen from the above summary, studies of the process of responding tend towards categorisation of the different psychological activities involved and towards descriptions of what constitutes maturation in reading. Two collections of papers which should contribute more than they do to our understanding of the process of responding are Cooper (1985) and Many and Cox (1992), although in their defence it has to be said that the former has a focus upon the theories that should guide our study of readers and the research methodologies that derive from them, and the latter is primarily concerned with reader 'stance' (Rosenblatt 1978) as the discussion of types of reader below indicates. Brief comment upon these two collections is appropriate before moving on to consider reading development.

Only some of the seventeen papers in Cooper's compilation bear upon the subject of children and literature. The first of the three parts of the book is helpful in relating theoretical issues of response to practice, especially the chapters by Rosenblatt, Purves and Petrosky. In part two, Kintgen's piece stands out, not only because its focus is poetry (a comparative rarity in such company),

but because it faces up to the problems of monitoring responses, and attempts to describe the mental activities and processes of the reader. As with many researchers, Kintgen's subjects are graduate students but the methodology here could readily transfer to younger readers. The four contributors to the final part of the book on classroom literature, whom one might expect to deal with children and their books, studiously avoid doing so, preferring instead to discuss theoretical and methodological issues such as the need to identify response research with literary pedagogy (Bleich), the use of school surveys (Squire), and the evaluation of the outcomes of literary study (Cooper).

Many and Cox (1992) take their impetus from Cooper's book and their inspiration from Rosenblatt (1978). The first part gives theoretical perspectives on reader stance and response and includes specific consideration of readings of selected children's books (Benton) and of young readers' responses (Corcoran). The papers in part two focus upon students' perspectives when reading and responding and tell us more about types of readers than about process; these are dealt with below. Part three deals with classroom interactions of teachers, students and literature. Hade explores 'stance' in both silent reading and reading aloud, arguing its transactional and triadic nature in the classroom. Zancella writes engagingly about the use of biography, in the sense of a reader's personal history, in responding to literature and how this influences the teacher's methods. Zarrillo and Cox build upon Rosenblatt's efferent/aesthetic distinction and urge more of the

latter in classroom teaching in the light of their empirical findings that 'elementary teachers tend to direct children to adopt efferent stances towards literature' (p.245). Many and Wiseman take a similar line and report their enquiries into teaching particular books (e.g. Mildred Taylor's Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry 1976) with efferent and aesthetic emphases to different, parallel classes. At various points, all these studies touch upon the issue of the process of responding; but, equally, they also relate to some of the other issues that the remainder of this chapter discusses.

(ii) Development in Reading

Of these, the question of how children develop as readers of literature is one of the most frequently raised. The issue has been approached in four main ways: personal reminiscences of bookish childhoods (Sampson, 1947; Inglis, 1981); the growth of the child's sense of story in relation to the Piagetian stages of development (Applebee 1978; Tucker 1981); the development of literacy, with the idea of matching individual and age-group needs to appropriate books (Fisher 1974; Meek 1982); and, deductions about development drawn from surveys of children's reading interests and habits (Jenkinson 1940; Whitehead et al 1977). While none of these writers would see their work as necessarily falling strictly under the reader-response heading, all are in fact listening to what children as readers say about their experiences and, in more recent years, conscious of interpreting their findings against a background of reader-response criticism. This awareness is evident, for example, in the work of

Tucker (1980) who, in a paper entitled 'Can we Ever Know The Reader's Response?' argues that children's responses are different from adults' (in, say, the relative emphasis they give to the quality of the writing as opposed to the pace of the plot) before he goes on to relate their responses to intellectual and emotional development as psychologists describe it, the subject of his subsequent book. In the highly influential work of Meek, too, from The Cool Web (1977) onwards, reader-response criticism has been one of her perspectives - evident, for example, in her 'Prolegomena for a Study of Children's Literature' (1980: 35) and in her exploration of the relationship between literacy and literature in her account of the reading lessons to be found in picture books (Meek 1988). Or again, in the discussion of their findings of children's reading preferences at 10+, 12+ and 14+, Whitehead and his team speculate about the cognitive and affective factors involved in the interaction between children and their books. All are aware that response-oriented criticism should be able to tell us more about this interaction at different ages.

Developmental stages in literary reading are outlined by Jackson (1982), Protherough (1983), and Thomson (1986) on the basis of classroom enquiries with young readers as we have already seen; and there have been some small-scale studies of reading development focussed upon responses to specific books. Hickman (1983) studied three classes, totalling ninety primary school-aged children, and monitored their spontaneous responses, variations in solicited verbal responses, the implications of non-responses, and the role of the

teacher in respect of two texts: Shel Silverstein's Where the Sidewalk Ends (1974) and D. McPhail's The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch (1978). She was interested in the age-related patterns of responses and in the influences of the class teacher. Cullinan, Harwood and Galda (1983) discuss the relationship between pupils' comprehension and response to literature and report the results of a study, conducted with eighteen readers in grades, 4, 6 and 8, which focussed on readings of and taped responses to Paterson's, Bridge to Terabithia (1977) and U. le Guin's, A Wizard of Earthsea (1968). Their data confirmed that there are clear developmental levels in children's comprehension and they claim that: 'Reader-response provides a way to look at the multi-dimensional nature of comprehension' (p.37). Galda (1992) has subsequently reported on a four-year longitudinal study of eight readers' readings of selected books representing realistic and fantasy fiction in order to explore any differences in responses to these two genres. The 'realistic' texts included Paterson's Bridge to Terabithia (1977) and N. Hinton's The Outsiders (1968); the 'fantasy' texts included M. L'Engle's A Wind in the Door (1973) and S. Cooper's The Dark is Rising (1981). She considers reading factors, such as developing analytical ability; text factors, arguing that children find it easier to enter the world of realistic fiction than they do of fantasy stories; and concludes by advocating the 'spectator role' (Harding 1937; Britton 1970) as a stance that offers readers access to both genres.

(iii) Types of Reader Behaviour

The third theme concerns different sorts of readers or readings. It would be too much to claim that there is an established typology of readers; there have been few studies that venture beyond generalised discussions such as that between 'interrogative' and 'acquiescent' reading styles (Benton and Fox 1985: 16-17), itself a tentative extension of Holland's (1975) notion of personal style in reading behaviour. One study that does make some clear category decisions is that of Dias and Hayhoe (1988: 52-58) in respect of 14- and 15-year old pupils' reading and responding to poems. Their 'Responding-Aloud Protocols' (RAPs) describe earlier revealed four patterns of reading : paraphrasing, thematizing, allegorizing, and problem-solving. They stress that these are patterns of reading not readers (p.57) but have difficulty throughout in maintaining this discrimination. Nonetheless, theirs is the most sophisticated account to date of that phenomenon that most teachers and others concerned with children's books have noticed without being able to explain, namely, that individual children reveal personal patterns of reading behaviour irrespective of the nature of the book being read. The study of these four reading patterns under the sub-headings of what the reader brings to the text, the reader's moves, closure, the reader's relationship with the text, and other elements is one that needs to be replicated and developed in relation to other types of text.

Fry (1985) explored the novel-reading of six young readers (two eight-year olds; two twelve-year olds; two fifteen-year olds)

through tape-recorded conversations over a period of eight months. The six case-studies give some vivid documentary evidence of individual responses (e.g. p.99 on the ways readers see themselves in books) and also raise general issues such as re-readings, the appeal of series writers like Blyton, the relation of text-fiction and film-fiction, and the developmental process. Cox and Many's (1992) collection of papers includes several that focus particularly upon readers' behaviours, not least their own development of Rosenblatt's efferent/aesthetic distinction in respect of the stances adopted by a class of ten-year olds in their responses to Betsy Byars' The Summer of the Swans (1970) and other stories. Encisco, in the same collection, builds upon Benton's (1983) model of the secondary world and gives an exhaustive case-study of one ten-year old girl's reading of chapters from three stories in order to observe the strategies she uses to create her story world from these texts. Benton's development of the secondary world concept, after Tolkien (1938) and Auden (1968), is reappraised in Cox and Many (1992 : 15-18 and 23-48) and has also been extended by the author to incorporate aspects of the visual arts, notably paintings and picture-books (Benton 1992). The concept as originally formulated appeared in the special issue of the 'Journal of Research and Development of Education' (1983) along with several other articles that focus upon readers' behaviours. Beach (1983) looks at what the reader brings to the text and reports an enquiry aimed at determining the effects of differences in prior knowledge of literary conventions and attitudes on readers' responses through a comparison between High School and College English Education students' responses to a short story by John Updike.

Pillar (1983) discusses aspects of moral judgement in response to fairy tales and presents the findings from a study of the responses of sixty elementary school children to three fables. The responses are discussed in terms of the principles of justice that distinguish them. This enquiry edges us towards the fourth theme where reader-response methods are employed in culturally- oriented studies.

(iv) Culturally-Oriented Studies

Children's concepts and social attitudes have been the subject of reader-response enquiries in three complementary ways: multi-cultural and feminist studies, which explore how far literature can be helpful in teaching about issues of race or gender; whole culture studies, which consider children's responses to literature in the context of the broad range of their interests; and, cross-cultural studies, which compare the responses of young readers from different countries to the same texts to identify similarities and cultural differences. An article and a book about each group must suffice to indicate the emphases and the degree to which reader-response theory and practice have been influential.

Evans (1992) contains several studies with explicitly cultural concerns, among which is 'Feminist Approaches to Teaching: John Updike's "A and P"' by Bogdan, Millen and Pitt which sets out to explore gender issues in the classroom via Updike's short story. They quote Kolodny (in Showalter 1985 : 158) in support of the shift feminist studies makes from seeing reader-response in a purely

experiential dimension to a more philosophical enquiry into how 'aesthetic response is .... invested with epistemological, ethical, and moral concerns'. The feminist position is stated explicitly: 'Reading pleasure can no longer be its own end-point, but rather part of a larger dialectical process which strives for an "altered reading attentiveness" to gender in every reading act' (Evans, p.151). This dialectical response model is further elaborated and augmented by specific pedagogical suggestions to help young readers towards this new attentiveness.

Within the broadly, and somewhat uncomfortably, defined field of multi-cultural education, the most sophisticated use of reader-response criticism and practice is Beverley Naidoo's (1992) enquiry into the role of literature, especially fiction, in educating young people about race. Working with a teacher and his class of all-white 13-14 year old pupils over a period of one academic year, Naidoo introduced a sequence of four novels to their work with increasingly explicit racial issues: Buddy (N. Hinton, 1983), Friedrich (H.P. Richter, 1978), Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (M. Taylor, 1987) and Waiting for the Rain (S. Gordon, 1987). Influenced by Hollindale's (1988) notion of 'the reader as ideologist', Rosenblatt's (1978/1985) transactional theory and Benton's (1988) ethnographic approach to reader-response enquiries, Naidoo adopted an action-researcher role to develop 'ways of exploring these texts which encouraged empathy with the perspective of characters who were victims of racism but who resisted it' (p.22). Written and oral responses in journals and discussion were at the centre of the procedures. Many challenging

and provocative issues are examined through this enquiry, including overt and institutionalised racism, whether teaching about race does challenge or merely reinforces racism, the nature of empathy and the gender differences pupils exhibited. The cultural context, especially the sub-culture of the particular classroom, emerged as a dominant theme. The subtle inter-relatedness of text, context, readers and writers, is sensitively explored in a study that shows how reader-response methods can help to illuminate the values and attitudes that readers sometimes hide, even from themselves.

The second group of 'whole culture' studies tends to focus upon adolescent readers. Stories and poems, especially those encountered in school, are seen as but one aspect of the cultural context in which teenagers live and in which books are low on their agenda after television, computer games, rock music, comics and magazines. Beach and Freedman's (1992) paper, 'Responding as a Cultural Act: Adolescent's Responses to Magazine Ads and Short Stories' widens the perspective from the individual reader's 'personal' and 'unique' responses to accommodate the notion of response as a cultural practice. They discuss the cultural practices required in adolescent peer groups and note the ways in which these are derived from their experiences with the mass media. Examples from adolescents' responses to magazine advertisements and short stories illustrate how these practices operate within teenage culture. Particular points of interest in the responses of these 115 8th and 11th grade pupils are the gender differences, the tendency to blur fiction and reality when talking about the advertising images, and the low incidence of

critical responses. Reader-response criticism also influences Sarland's (1991) study of young people's reading. He takes seriously both Chambers' (1977) account of the implied child reader (discussed below) and Meek's (1987) plea for an academic study of children's literature which situates it within the whole culture of young people. Building on Fry's (1988) work, he considers the popular literature that children read both in relation to a culture dominated by television and video, and in relation to the 'official' literature read in school. By eliciting and analysing students' responses to such books as Stephen King's Carrie (1974) and James Herbert's The Fog (1975), Sarland draws upon response-oriented theory and practice to discuss the importance of these texts to their readers and to begin to open up a sub-culture of which, at best, teachers are usually only hazily aware.

Cross-cultural studies are relatively uncommon for the obvious reason that they are more difficult to set up and sustain. Bunbury and Tabbert's article for Children's Literature in Education (1989; reprinted Hunt 1992) compared the responses of Australian and German children to an Australian bush-ranger story, R. Stow's Midnite (Puffin, 1982). Using Jauss's notion of 'ironic identification', where the reader is drawn in and willingly submits to the fictional illusion only to have the author subvert this aesthetic experience, the enquiry considered a range of responses which, while there are interesting insights into individual readings, nonetheless ends inclusively by stating: 'The best we can say is that the capacity to experience ironic identification extends along a spectrum of reading

encounters which vary in intensity' (Hunt, p.124). The study is ambitious in tackling two difficult topics whose relationship is complex: children's sense of the tone of a text and the effect of translation upon the readers' responses. To begin to open up such issues is an achievement in itself. Chapter 6 of Dias and Hayhoe's (1988) book makes explicit the international perspective on the teaching of poetry that permeates the whole of this Anglo-Canadian collaboration. Views from Australia, Britain, Canada and the U.S.A. on good practice in poetry teaching all share the same principle of developing pupils' responses. Clearly, cross-cultural influences grow more readily and are more easily monitored in English-speaking countries than in L1/L2 situations; yet, in addition to the similarities, there is sufficient evidence here of cultural diversity to encourage other researchers to explore the ways in which we can learn from each other about how children's responses to literature are mediated by the cultural contexts in which they occur.

(v) Text-Oriented Studies

Studies of children's literature which directly parallel the work of, say, Iser (1974) or Fish (1980) in their close examination of particular texts are surprisingly rare. It is as if those who work in this field have been so concerned with pedagogy and children as readers that they have failed to exploit reader-response criticism as a means of understanding the nature of actual texts. Two concepts, however, which have received some attention are the 'implied reader' and the notion of 'intertextuality'. The first, developed by Iser

(1974) after Booth (1961), for a time encouraged the search for the 'implied child reader' in children's books; the second followed from enquiries into how readers make meaning and the realisation of the complex relationships that exist between the readers, the text, other texts, other genres, and the cultural context of any 'reading'.

Although Chambers (1977/1985) and Tabbert (1980) gave the lead, the implied child reader remains a neglected figure in children's book criticism. In 'The Reader in the Book' Chambers takes Iser's concept and advocates its central importance in children's book criticism. He illustrates Roald Dahl's assumptions about the implied adult reader of his story 'The Champion of the World' (Dahl, 1959) in contrast to those about the implied child reader of the rewritten version in the children's book Danny: The Champion of the World (1975/77), and argues that the narrative voice and textual features of the latter create a sense of an intimate, yet adult-controlled, relationship between the implied author and the implied child reader. He generalises from this example to claim that this voice and this relationship are common in children's books, and identifies both with the figure of the 'friendly adult storyteller who knows how to entertain children while at the same time keeping them in their place' (p.69). Much of the remainder of his article rests upon two further narrative features: 'the adoption of a child point of view' (p.72) to sustain this adult-author/child-reader relationship; and the deployment within the text of indeterminacy gaps which the reader must fill in order to generate meanings. These three characteristics - the literary relationship, the point of view, and

the tell-tale gaps - are then exemplified in a critique of Lucy Boston's The Children of Green Knowe (1954). Chambers' article is already regarded as a landmark in the development of criticism (Hunt 1990: 90), not least because it opened up one means of defining the singular character of a form of literature that is designated by its intended audience. That this lead has been followed so infrequently calls into question the seriousness of the whole critical enterprise in this field. Among the few who have exploited these concepts in relation to children's books is Tabbert (1980) who comments usefully on the notion of 'telling gaps' and 'the implied reader' in some classic children's texts and sees a fruitful way forward in psychologically-oriented criticism, particularly in the methodology adopted by Holland. Benton (1978/1992) parallels the historically changing relationship between implied author and implied reader that is found in Iser's (1974) studies of Fielding, Thackeray and Joyce, with a corresponding critique of the openings of three novels by children's authors - Thomas Hughes's Tom Brown's Schooldays (1856), C. Day Lewis's The Otterbury Incident (1948), and Alan Garner's Red Shift (1973). The emphases, however here, are upon the nature of the collaborative relationship and upon narrative technique rather than on the implied child reader. Shavit (1983: 60-67) extends Iser's concept to embrace the notion of childhood as well as the child as implied reader. After giving a historical perspective on the idea of childhood the discussion focusses upon various versions of 'Little Red Riding Hood' in order to explore 'how far they were responsible for different implied readers' (p.61). In particular, she argues that prevailing notions of childhood helped determine the changing

character of these texts over several centuries from Perrault's version to those of the present day.

By far the most rigorous account of the implied reader is that of Stephens (1992), given from a position that is sceptical about a mode of reading which locates the reader only within the text and ignores questions of ideology. He argues that in critical practice the being or meaning of the text is best characterised as:

> .... a dialectic between textual discourse (including its construction of an implied reader and a range of potential subject positions) and a reader's disposition, familiarity with story conventions and experiential knowledge. (p.59).

His account of ideology and the implied reader in two picture books (Cooper and Hutton, The Selkie Girl, 1986: Gerstein, The Seal Mother, 1986) develops this argument and leads him to take issue with Chambers' view of the implied reader on ideological grounds. He says of Chambers' account that:

> .... his own ideology of reading demands a reified 'implicated' reader, led by textual strategies to discover a determinate meaning. (p.67).

Stephens' conceptualisation of the implied reader is significant both of itself and in helping to explain the paucity of critical effort in this area following Chambers' article. For it tells us that criticism has moved on and, in particular, that such concepts can no longer be regarded as innocent aspects of narrative.

Stephens, too, offers the fullest account to date of

intertextuality in the third chapter of his book 'Not by words alone: language, intertextuality and society' (pp.84-119). He outlines seven kinds of relationship which may exist between a particular text and any other texts and goes on to discuss various manifestations of intertextuality in children's literature, notably in fairy tales. Agee (1983: 55-59) concentrates on the narrower focus of literary allusion and reader-response and begins to explore the intertextual patterning of such books as Z for Zachariah (R.C. O'Brien, 1977), Jacob I Have Loved (K. Paterson, 1981) and Fahrenheit 451 (R. Bradbury 1967). Stephens and Agee both approach the topic exclusively through the study of texts. Meek (1988) keeps young readers constantly in view when she draws upon the intertext of oral and written literature, together with the Iserian concepts of the implied reader and indeterminacy gaps, in her brief but widely acclaimed paper 'How Texts Teach What Readers Learn'. Her main texts are picture books: the telling gaps in Rosie's Walk (P. Hutchins, 1969) and Granpa (J. Burningham, 1984) and the play of intertexts in The Jolly Postman (J. & A. Ahlberg, 1986) and William's Version (J. Mark, 1980) are explored with great subtlety and display, above all, the quality that distinguishes the best sort of criticism of children's literature: the ability to listen to children's responses to a book and to 'read' these with the same effort of attention that is afforded to the text themselves. Reader-response criticism accommodates both the reader and the text; there is no area of literary activity where this is more necessary than in the literature that defines itself by reference to its young readership.

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